

Resighting and reporting banded shorebirds

Purpose and history of shorebird banding

Shorebird banding began in Delaware Bay in 1998. Some of the most important information collected through the years has been obtained through retrapping previously banded birds. For example, if a shorebird is trapped more than once during migration, the rate at which it is gaining weight on its flight can be determined. If it is captured in subsequent years, the percentage of birds from its species that survived during the particular year can be determined. Birds captured in places other than Delaware Bay may reveal important migrational or wintering habitats and insights into migratory patterns and timing. This information was traditionally collected using the USFWS metal band to obtain the history on a bird.



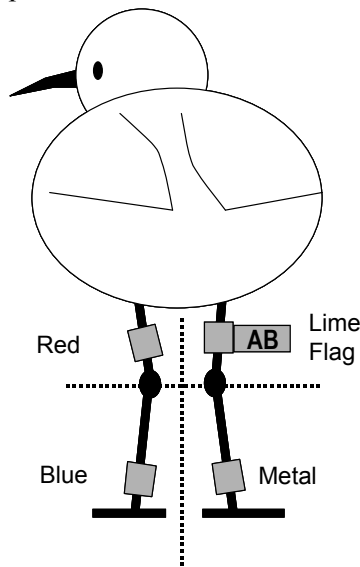
In 2003, the Delaware Shorebird Project expanded the marking effort to include individually coded leg flags (see photos) on Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*), Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*), and Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*). These flags can be easily read in the field with binoculars or spotting scopes. Data can be gotten from the birds without capturing them, which has greatly increased the ability to monitor them while reducing the number of birds that needed to be captured each year. Importantly, many more people are becoming involved in observing these birds allowing them to participate in an important research and monitoring project. In turn, this involvement has greatly expanded the scope of research now being conducted.

There are currently thousands of shorebirds with individually marked flags. These birds can be seen anywhere along the Atlantic Coast during the winter or spring and fall migrations. Every sighting of these birds is very important to the understanding and conservation of Delaware Bay shorebirds.

What to Look For

Shorebirds are fitted with a variety of flag colors depending on the country within which they were banded. For some marking schemes, flag color and band position are important to identify an individual. For others, simply the flag color and code is enough. In the US, dark green flags do not have an inscribe code but light or lime green flags do. Try to record as much information from the marking scheme as possible.

Country	Flag Color
United States	Green (light/lime if coded)
Argentina	Orange
Chile	Red
Brazil	Blue
Canada	White



An easy way to record band and flag information is to think of the position of the band or flags with regard to the birds' body. For example, the diagram at left illustrates a bird with a lime flag and red, blue, and metal bands in the following positions:

- Upper Left Leg: Red Band
- Lower Left Leg: Blue Band
- Upper Right Leg: Lime Flag with "AB" code
- Lower Right Leg: Metal USFWS Band

This can be recorded as above or by using the following notations:

$$\begin{array}{c|c} \text{R} & \text{FL(AB)} \\ \hline \text{B} & \text{M} \end{array}$$

or R/B:FL(AB)/M

It may be a bit more difficult in the field. As in the photo below, it is more common only for some bands to be seen. The most important information to record is the flag color and code.



The above birds would be recorded as follows:

Red Knot:	Upper Left: Lime flag with “AXJ” code; Lower Left: Nothing; Upper Right: unknown; Lower Right: Nothing <u>OR</u> FL(AXJ)/-:~/-
Sanderling:	Upper Left: Lime flag with “UXC” code; Lower left: Unknown; Upper Right: Nothing; Lower Right: Unknown <u>OR</u> FL(UXC)/?:-/? (Dashes indicate no band or flag in that position and “?” indicates unknown.)

Even knowing just the flag color and code is enough to know when and where these birds were banded.

If you see a flagged bird please collect and report as much of the following information as possible:

- Location (Be as specific as possible)
- Date
- Species
- Band and flag information (as described above):
 - Flag color and code (Most Important)
 - Band colors
 - Band and flag positions
- Flock size of the species with a flagged individual (useful if known)

Please report any observations of flagged birds to Kevin Kalasz, Coordinator of the Delaware Shorebird Project (**email preferred**). For submitting them, you will receive information on where and when the bird you saw was banded, and the information you provide will be applied to shorebird research and monitoring work.

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